

How do I complete a big project?

Have you ever waited until the last minute to start a big assignment, then relied on late-night panic/inspiration, turned out a brilliant project, and got an amazing grade? Ha, didn't think so. With very few exceptions, **big projects (if done well) require thinking ahead, planning wisely, and investing time and effort into multiple steps.**

So what's the smart way to tackle a big project?

Project Planning

Think: What are the details?

Write down exactly what you need to do, and when.

Write down the due date, requirements (length, sources to use, or any other details), and the topic or question. Keep this information in one place (like your agenda).



Record: What are the steps that you need to take?

Break down the assignment into manageable pieces or steps, and record them.

A big project can be overwhelming. A series of small steps, however, is much less scary, and much easier to begin. The steps of your assignment will vary depending on the project itself, but they'll probably include many of the following:

1. **Brainstorm.** What do you already know about the topic? What questions do you have? Jot down your thoughts.
2. **Begin your research.** At first, limit yourself to sources that will help you get a good overall idea of your topic.
3. **Narrow your topic.** Try to capture your basic focus or idea in a sentence or two.
4. **Plan your research.** Think about and jot down potential information sources.
5. **Complete your research.** Research can be messy—so stay organized!
6. **Finalize your topic.** Now that you have more info, finalize your topic or idea/thesis.
7. **Make an outline.** Break your topic or thesis down into sub-topics that follow each other in a logical way.
8. **Write or create the first draft of your project!** Use your outline and your notes.
9. **Revise and polish.** Wait a day or two, and then proofread, revise, and polish. Ask a parent or friend to proofread as well.

Act: Set a time to make it happen.

Schedule time to work on each step—and then follow through!

Use your **ACT** space to schedule in each step if you know which days you'll probably work on them. Otherwise, use your weekly **THINK** space to jot down what steps you need to complete each week, and plan the steps into your **ACT** space later.

Check: Assess the process.

Look back . . . and identify ways to improve for next time.

Are you happy with your final project? What went well, and what didn't? What would you do the same next time, and what would you do differently? Remember, the only way to learn from your mistakes, and from your successes, is to look back and reflect on them.

Project Planning Sheet


 **Think:** What are the details?

This is what I need to do, and when:

Due date: _____

Specific requirements (length, sources, etc.): _____

Topic/question: _____

 **Record:** What are the steps that I need to take?

These are the steps of my assignment:

1. **Brainstorm:** What do I already know? What questions do I have? Other thoughts?

2. **Begin my research:** Where will I look to get an overall understanding of my topic? _____

3. **Narrow my topic:** How would I summarize my central topic or focus? _____

4. **Plan my research:** What sources can I use (ordinary and unusual)? Where will I look? _____

5. **Complete my research:** I'm keeping my notes organized, and writing down my source information.
I'm using a variety of sources, including several that disagree with my point of view.

6. **Finalize my topic:** Now that I have more information, what is my central topic or focus? _____

7. **Make an outline:** What are my topics and sub-topics?

8. **Write/create my project:** I'm following my outline and using my notes.

9. **Revise and polish:** I'm reviewing and revising my first draft, and am asking someone else to proofread it as well.

 **Act:** When will I make it happen?

I've scheduled time in my agenda to work on each step.

 **Check:** How did I do?

Looking back, these are my thoughts, and ideas of how to improve for next time:

What part of my project am I most and least satisfied with? During the process, what went well, and what didn't go so well? What would I do the same or differently next time?

